

Commissioner for Patents

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IN THE ABSTRACT

There is described a method for providing audio and visual communication between a speaker and at least one hearing impaired person. The method comprises the steps of providing the speaker with a headset frame having a camera attached thereto and positioned to capture images of the speaker's mouth; providing the hearing impaired person with a display; capturing continuous video images of the speaker's mouth using the camera; and transmitting the images in real-time to the display for the hearing impaired person to view such that movement of the speaker's mouth coincides with sound emitted by the speaker. ~~The apparatus for hearing impaired persons of the present invention comprises a telephone receptionist style headset which is to be worn by a speaker person on her head, in the conventional way. This headset is equipped with a frontwardly extending support arm which carries at its front free end a miniature camera, and an optional microphone, targeting the speaker's mouth. The camera is linked by a wire to a transmitter having intrinsic power means, which transmits in real time the images caught by the camera as a wireless signal to receivers located remotely of the transmitter, e.g. on desks in a classroom. The receivers decode the signal and retransmit the images to television screens. Thus, hearing impaired persons can observe the screens to read the lips of the speaker person, so as to understand the conversation, notwithstanding the head orientation of the speaker person. The wireless transmission is of low power, to obviate the necessity of obtaining compulsory licences otherwise required by government regulatory authorities for wireless transmission, and to prevent two or more wireless signals from different transmitters simultaneously used in different locations from interfering with each other.~~